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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 WARSAW 001281

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TAGS: [CMGT](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [ASEC](#) [RSOX](#) [PL](#)
SUBJECT: INCREASE IN WALK-IN TRAFFIC TO WARSAW'S CONSULAR
SECTION: A CHANGING POPULATION

REF: A. (A) WARSAW 02516
[1](#)B. (B) WARSAW 00266

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Classified By: Consul General Lisa Piascik for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: In the last year Warsaw's consular section has seen an increase in both the number and diversity of walk-ins seeking asylum or refugee status in the United States. The majority of cases continue to come from neighboring countries, primarily Belarus. However, recent applicants are increasingly diverse, including applicants from Nepal, Cuba, and Iraq. Consular walk-ins at Embassy Warsaw typically seek refugee status in Poland, and are fundamentally economic migrants.

[1](#)2. (C) The number of walk-ins seen by the consular section at Embassy Warsaw in the last ten months has increased to an average of almost three a month. Unless pursuing a purely visa-related matter, persons who appear at Embassy Warsaw's Consular Information Booth speak with both a Consular Officer and either an ARSO or the RSO. The 26 walk-ins in the last ten months included ten Belarusians, four Russians, three Ukrainians, two Cubans, two Nepalese, two North Koreans, one Iraqi, one Bulgarian, and one Pole.

[1](#)3. (U) The Embassy refers walk-ins, as appropriate, to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Warsaw, the Polish Office of Repatriation and Aliens, and/or the Helsinki Foundation for further assistance (See Reftel A). All three of these agencies work together closely in Warsaw, and their assessments of applicant's situations are consistent, i.e., Poland is a safe third country upholding its EU refugee safeguards. In fact, many persons appear at our consular section have already begun the refugee application process through UNHCR or Polish authorities. Interestingly, consular officers have not been faced with refugee requests from Chechens in the past year, though Chechens are the single largest group of refugee seekers in Poland (Reftel A).

[1](#)4. (C) The majority of consular walk-ins at Embassy Warsaw are Belarusian citizens claiming persecution for participation in opposition groups. Warsaw consular walk-ins from Belarus have included many single males who clearly seem to be economic migrants, though every Belarusian we see claims in some way that their participation in the Belarusian opposition has led them to seek asylum/refugee status. We consistently hear from these aspirants that the Belarusian authorities monitor their calls, make it difficult for them

to find work, and subject them to police persecution. The three Ukrainian refugee seekers made similar claims, but none were found to be credible. All four of the Russian refugee aspirants were deemed mentally unstable.

¶5. (C) Walk-ins at Warsaw's Consular Section are increasingly diverse. In October 2006 two Cubans, reportedly brother and sister, appeared at Embassy Warsaw claiming that they were sent to Ukraine on an exchange with a social group and then made their way to Poland. The male said that he was a baker by profession and that his sister was unemployed. Two North Koreans appeared at Embassy Warsaw in February 2007, stating that they had been sent to Ukraine to work in the forests and that they made their way on foot across the Ukrainian-Polish border to apply for refugee status in Poland. A Nepalese man appeared in December 2006 saying that he had paid a smuggler to take him to England, but that the smuggler had taken him to Poland, then kept his passport and abandoned him here. One Iraqi appeared in October 2006 seeking refugee status based on his work for the U.S. military in Iraq. After appropriate inquiries, Warsaw's DAO was unconvinced by his claims.

¶6. (C) All of the persons described were questioned to ascertain their eligibility for refugee status based on current guidance; the Embassy subsequently deemed them unqualified for further processing. All but the Iraqi reported coming to Poland through Ukraine or Belarus, and many had applied for refugee status in Poland as soon as they reached the Polish border. Though some expressed interest in continuing on to other EU countries, European Union regulations dictate that they stay in their country of first application if they wish to pursue a European refugee/asylum claim, forcing them to pursue their claims in Poland.

¶7. (U) All the walk-ins that consular officers see here are typically looking for multiple options for resettlement, and

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generally seem to choose to pursue refugee status in the United States for economic reasons. Although the Eastern European refugee-seekers are relatively better off than counterparts from poorer regions of the world, proximity to Poland and the EU is sufficiently tempting for them to find a way across the border and seek a better life elsewhere.

¶8. (C) COMMENT: Though it is impossible for consular officers to verify the stories of walk-ins, we hear consistently that economic conditions in Belarus are poor, and notably worse for those who express any opposition to the government. We expect an increasing number of walk-ins from both Belarus and Ukraine as long as the social, economic, and political situation in those countries is unstable and Poland offers increasing opportunities. End Comment.

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